



# SOMERSET

## Bristol County



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## NARRATIVE

### **Narrative**

The Town of Somerset is a suburban community in Bristol County, on the west side of the Taunton River. This area was originally known as the Shawamat Lands and was incorporated as a town in 1790. Although there was a significant Indian population when colonists arrived, by the end of King Philip's war in 1677 English settlers dominated the Pocassets, members of the Wampanoag tribe. The earliest colonists farmed and fished, both in the river and off-shore but the town developed shipyards, mercantile and shipping businesses early in its history. The first documented local shipyard was established between 1707 and 1712 on the Lee River by Samuel Lee. The dominant religious group in early Somerset were the Quakers, who established a meeting house about 1701, one of the few and earliest Quaker churches in southeastern Massachusetts.

After the War of 1812, Somerset became one of the chief distribution points in New England for foreign goods with trade to China, the West Indies, Europe and the Atlantic coast. By 1847, 138 vessels were built and registered in the town with many engaged in the coastal trade. The most important shipyard was that of James M. Hood, whose yard launched several important clipper ships. This industry boomed after the Mexican War and the California Gold Rush, and spawned shipping related activities such as a ropewalk and the Somerset Iron Works, which made anchors. Aside from shipping related businesses, the largest early industry in Somerset was the making of stoneware. When steam began destroying shipbuilding, the anchor works was taken over by Job Leonard who proceeded to develop a nailworks which, by 1865, was the largest single industry in town. Through all of this industrial growth, south Somerset remained largely agricultural. The opening of the Somerset and Dighton Railroad led to the establishment in the town of the Old Colony's major coal port in 1872, while an enterprising former potter created a cannery operation in the early part of the 20th century. However, as the industrial development of Fall River absorbed Somerset's industry, the community turned increasingly from shipping and iron manufacturing to suburban services. The dominant industry in Somerset since the First World War has been power generation with the erection of the Montaup Electric Company plant in 1923 and Bryant Point in 1963.

The dominant character of Somerset has been residential since the bankruptcy of Fall River in the Depression brought a flood of middle-class residents into the town. Unlike most communities in the area, Somerset increased its population by 74% during the Depression. The town is now a suburban community with some small scale resort and second home development and its 15 miles of waterfront are primarily used for recreation rather than industry. (Seal supplied by community. Narrative based on information provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission)



# GEOGRAPHY

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## Location

Southeastern Massachusetts, bordered by Dighton on the north, the Taunton River and Fall River on the east, Mount Hope Bay on the south, and Swansea on the west. Somerset is 4 miles west of Fall River; 44 miles south of Boston; 20 miles southwest of Providence, Rhode Island; and 197 miles from New York City.

**Total Area:** 11.98 sq. miles

**Land Area:** 8.11 sq. miles

**Population:** 17,655

**Density:** 2,177 per sq. mile

## Climate

(National Climatic Data Center)

(New Bedford Station)

Normal temperature in January.....30.6°F

Normal temperature in July.....73.5°F

Normal annual precipitation.....47.3"

## U.S.G.S. Topographical Plates

Somerset, Fall River, Assonet

## Regional Planning Agency

Southeastern Regional Planning and  
Economic Development District

## Metropolitan Statistical Area

(1993 Definition)

Fall River



# GOVERNMENT

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## Municipal Offices

Main Number: (508) 672-0651

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

## Form of Government

Board of Selectmen

Town Administrator

Open Town Meeting

## Year Incorporated

As a town: 1790

## Registered Voters (Secretary of State 1994)

	Number	%	
Total Registered	11,180		
Democrats	5,195	46.5	%
Republicans	1,022	9.1	%
Other parties	0	0.0	%
Unenrolled Voters	4,963	44.4	%

## Legislators

[Senators and Representatives by City and Town](#)



# DEMOGRAPHICS

**Table DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000**

Geographic Area: Somerset town, Bristol County, Massachusetts

[For information on confidentiality protection, nonsampling error, and definitions, see text]

Subject	Number	Percent	Subject	Number	Percent
Total population.....	18,234	100.0	<b>HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE</b>		
<b>SEX AND AGE</b>			Total population.....	18,234	100.0
Male.....	8,635	47.4	Hispanic or Latino (of any race).....	90	0.5
Female.....	9,599	52.6	Mexican.....	31	0.2
Under 5 years.....	791	4.3	Puerto Rican.....	16	0.1
5 to 9 years.....	1,020	5.6	Cuban.....	1	-
10 to 14 years.....	1,209	6.6	Other Hispanic or Latino.....	42	0.2
15 to 19 years.....	1,098	6.0	Not Hispanic or Latino.....	18,144	99.5
20 to 24 years.....	795	4.0	White alone.....	17,834	97.8
25 to 34 years.....	1,997	11.0	<b>RELATIONSHIP</b>		
35 to 44 years.....	2,772	15.2	Total population.....	18,234	100.0
45 to 54 years.....	2,701	14.8	In households.....	17,952	98.5
55 to 59 years.....	1,132	6.2	Householder.....	6,987	38.3
60 to 64 years.....	944	5.2	Spouse.....	4,357	23.9
65 to 74 years.....	1,908	10.5	Child.....	5,196	28.5
75 to 84 years.....	1,460	8.0	Own child under 18 years.....	3,326	18.2
85 years and over.....	467	2.6	Other relatives.....	879	4.8
Median age (years).....	43.0	(X)	Under 18 years.....	299	1.6
18 years and over.....	14,516	79.6	Nonrelatives.....	533	2.9
Male.....	6,796	36.9	Unmarried partner.....	263	1.4
Female.....	7,780	42.7	In group quarters.....	282	1.5
21 years and over.....	13,958	76.5	Institutionalized population.....	271	1.5
62 years and over.....	4,393	24.1	Noninstitutionalized population.....	11	0.1
65 years and over.....	3,835	21.0	<b>HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE</b>		
Male.....	1,512	8.3	Total households.....	6,987	100.0
Female.....	2,323	12.7	Family households (families).....	5,260	75.3
<b>RACE</b>			With own children under 18 years.....	1,964	28.1
One race.....	18,090	99.2	Married-couple family.....	4,357	62.4
White.....	17,909	98.2	With own children under 18 years.....	1,586	22.7
Black or African American.....	90	0.2	Female householder, no husband present.....	686	9.8
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	22	0.1	With own children under 18 years.....	287	4.1
Asian.....	97	0.5	Nonfamily households.....	1,727	24.7
Asian Indian.....	22	0.1	Householder living alone.....	1,501	21.5
Chinese.....	33	0.2	Householder 65 years and over.....	898	12.9
Filipino.....	12	0.1	Households with individuals under 18 years.....	2,177	31.2
Japanese.....	3	-	Households with individuals 65 years and over.....	2,557	36.6
Korean.....	10	0.1	Average household size.....	2.57	(X)
Vietnamese.....	11	0.1	Average family size.....	2.98	(X)
Other Asian <sup>1</sup> .....	6	-	<b>HOUSING OCCUPANCY</b>		
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	4	-	Total housing units.....	7,143	100.0
Native Hawaiian.....	3	-	Occupied housing units.....	6,987	97.8
Guamanian or Chamorro.....	1	-	Vacant housing units.....	156	2.2
Samoa.....	-	-	For seasonal, recreational, or		
Other Pacific Islander <sup>2</sup> .....	-	-	occasional use.....	19	0.3
Some other race.....	28	0.2	Homeowner vacancy rate (percent).....	0.3	(X)
Two or more races.....	144	0.8	Rental vacancy rate (percent).....	3.3	(X)
<i>Race alone or in combination with one</i>			<b>HOUSING TENURE</b>		
<i>or more other races: <sup>3</sup></i>			Occupied housing units.....	6,987	100.0
White.....	18,046	99.0	Owner-occupied housing units.....	5,723	81.9
Black or African American.....	60	0.3	Renter-occupied housing units.....	1,264	18.1
American Indian and Alaska Native.....	63	0.3	Average household size of owner-occupied units.....	2.71	(X)
Asian.....	124	0.7	Average household size of renter-occupied units.....	1.92	(X)
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.....	12	0.1			
Some other race.....	83	0.5			

- Represents zero or rounds to zero. (X) Not applicable.

<sup>1</sup> Other Asian alone, or two or more Asian categories.

<sup>2</sup> Other Pacific Islander alone, or two or more Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories.

<sup>3</sup> In combination with one or more of the other races listed. The six numbers may add to more than the total population and the six percentages may add to more than 100 percent because individuals may report more than one race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000.



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# HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS

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**Home Sales** (Banker & Tradesman) -

[Town Stats - Free market Statistics](#)

**Subsidized Housing Units** (DHCD 1998)

[DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory](#)

Subsidized Housing Units: The number of housing units which count toward the municipality's 10% goal for low- and moderate-income housing. It includes both subsidized affordable units and market rate units in certain eligible subsidized developments.

**Public Housing Units** (DHCD 1999)

Conventional State: 135

Conventional Federal: 0

**Rental Assistance**(DHCD 1999)

State (MRVP: 2

Federal (Section 8): 0



# TRANSPORTATION

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## TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

Somerset which is situated in the New Bedford-Fall River Area is served by the airport and port facilities of New Bedford. In addition, Interstate 195 and State Routes 24 and 140 provide access to the airports, ports, and intermodal facilities of Providence and Boston.

### Major Highways

Principal highways are Interstate Route 195 and U.S.Route 6, which link the southern coastal cities and towns, and State Route 138 running N-S. The Fall River Expressway (State Route 24) is easily accessible in the neighboring city of Fall River.

### Rail

No commuter rail or freight service is available in southern Bristol County. Good commuter service between the neighboring city of Fall River and Boston and Logan Airport is provided by Bonanza Bus Company.

### Bus

Somerset is a member of the Southeast Regional Transit Authority (SRTA), which provides fixed route service between Fall River and Somerset. SRTA and the Council on Aging also provide paratransit services for the elderly and disabled.

### Other

The Fall River Municipal Airport, a General Aviation (GA) facility located 3 mi. N of the city, has 2 asphalt runways: 1,600'x 150' and 3,950'x 150'. Instrument approaches available: Non-precision.



# CULTURE AND RECREATION

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## LIBRARIES

[Board of Library Commissioners On-line Library Catalog](#)

## MUSEUMS

(American Association of Museums)

None

## RECREATION

[Telephone Numbers for Public Information](#)

**Recreational Facilities** (Recreational sites and activities)

[Department of Environmental Management Recreation Section](#)

[The UMass Dartmouth Theatre Company](#)



# MISCELLANEOUS

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## HEALTH FACILITIES

(Dept. of Public Health 1992)

### Hospitals

None

### Long Term Care

Clifton Geriatric Center LTCF

### Hospices

None

### Rest Homes

None

### UTILITIES

[Telephone Numbers for Public Utilities](#)



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NOTE: The COMMUNITY PROFILE draws information from a diversity of sources. The main source of information is listed under each section. In some instances comments submitted by the municipality were incorporated to correct and/or enhance the information obtained from the main source. However, no changes were made to those data bases which must be consistent throughout the state. DHCD has made efforts to ensure the accuracy of all data in the COMMUNITY PROFILES, but cannot take responsibility for any consequences arising from the use of the information contained in this document.